

Overview of Local Bridge Program

The Local Bridge Program is a new program that replaced the Michigan Critical Bridge Program. Legislation enacted October 1, 2004, created a Local Bridge Fund, a Local Bridge Advisory Board (LBAB), and seven Regional Bridge Councils (RBC). This legislation places control of the funding allocations of the newly formed Local Bridge Fund and the bridge selection process in the hands of the local agencies of Michigan. Funds from the Local Bridge Program are for construction costs. The costs for preliminary engineering, construction engineering, and right of way acquisition are not paid from the Local Bridge Fund.

There was a transition period between the Critical Bridge Program and the new Local Bridge Program. During the transition, the local agency bridge unit of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) continued to work with bridge projects that were on the "approved for funding" list. The list of unfunded bridge applications on file was maintained until the Local Bridge Program was fully implemented on October 1, 2005. On October 1, 2005, the "approved for funding" list of active projects was distributed to the RBCs. The RBCs had the option to incorporate these projects into their lists of bridge projects, move them to a list of projects to be funded in future years or remove them altogether; all of the seven RBCs incorporated these projects into their three year bridge plan. The list of unfunded applications was purged on October 1, 2005.

The LBAB is the state level committee that oversees the Local Bridge Program operations. It comprises of 8 members: 3 members from counties, 3 members from cities and villages and 2 non-voting members from MDOT. The LBAB is responsible for, at a minimum, the "Large" bridge program, emergency situations involving local bridges, allocation percentages of funding to each region, and ensuring the RBCs are following established guidelines.

An RBC is a regional committee that is charged with the responsibility of determining a 3-year bridge program that replaces, rehabilitates, and maintains the bridge inventory of their respective region. Each region's RBC evaluates and rates submitted applications, and determines which bridge projects are to be funded each year based on the dollars allocated by the LBAB. Annually, each RBC's 3-year program is reviewed by the LBAB for concurrence.

A new application process was created to work within the Local Bridge Program. As with the Critical Bridge Program, a call for applications is sent to all local agencies on an annual basis. The submitted applications are reviewed by the staff of MDOT Local Agency Programs' bridge unit for completeness and funding eligibility. Formula rating points are computed and each region's applications are submitted to their respective RBC for addition of discretionary points. A 3-year bridge program is maintained by each RBC.

Funding from the Local Bridge Fund is allocated based on available funds and weighted ratios stipulated in legislation. There are three factors used to create each region's ratios. The first ratio is the total deck area of locally owned bridges within each region divided by the total deck area of locally owned bridges in Michigan. The second ratio is the total structurally deficient deck area of locally owned bridges per region divided by the total structurally deficient deck area of locally owned bridges in Michigan. The third ratio is the number of locally owned bridges per region divided by the total number of locally owned bridges in Michigan. Each ratio is weighted by the LBAB within limits not to be less than 25% or greater than 50%. Currently, the deck area and number of bridge ratios are weighted 30% and the structurally deficient deck area ratio is weighted 40%. The product of the weightings and ratios are summed to determine the percentage of the Local Bridge Fund being allocated to each region's RBC.

The role of MDOT is to provide administrative support, technical assistance, and bridge inventory data. MDOT will review submitted applications, determine the computer generated rating points, check the plans and specifications for conformance to the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) guidelines, schedule and participate in all required meetings, and advertise and award contracts for the bridge projects. MDOT are non-voting members of both the LBAB and the RBCs.